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Author's Note

This is a short novel by *RootbeerCat02*. Warriors belongs to *Erin Hunter* and only most the characters and story are owned by me.

Please enjoy the story!

Allegiances

Since this story only involves one Clan, only they shall be listed.

WindClan

Leader: Heatherstar- a tall, long pelted light brown she-cat with soft yellow eyes

Deputy: Leopardstrike- an unusually spotted golden tabby tom with a paler muzzle, paws, and underbelly with pale gray eyes

Medicine Cat: Willowsong- a feathery pelted silver tabby with pale green eyes

Warriors: Sheepcoat- a long, tangle furred tom with darker ears and round orange eyes

Sweetbreeze- a pale tabby she-cat with ginger ears, eyespot, and tail with pale blue eyes

Tornfur- a dark russet tom with short, ragged fur and deep orange eyes

Brackenheart- a bracken colored tom with fiery amber eyes

Asterflight- a large black and white tom with a scar over both shoulders and bright orange eyes

Paleberry- a cream colored she-cat with darker ears, back, and tail with a white underbelly and yellow eyes

Brokenshard- a tall dark brown tabby she-cat with pale paws and chin with fierce brown eyes

Queens: Cherryfire- a golden she-cat with darker tabby stripes and ears with bright green eyes, mate of Asterflight

Kits: Grasskit- a golden tabby she-cat with brilliant green eyes

Patchkit- a dark brown tom with golden patches and gray eyes

Lilackit- a pale she-cat with darker mottled patches and orange eyes

Elders: Spottedflash- a pale brown she-cat with spots that were once distinct on her pelt with ice blue eyes

Thrushfeather- a pale mottled gray tom with a shredded ear and orange eyes

Prologue

Fireflies illuminated the night sky, making the moors of WindClan territory more beautiful than normal. Two figures sat, silhouetted by the moonlight. They chatted quietly and after every few moments, one would let out an outburst of laughter or a purr, nuzzling the other lovingly.

A figure watched from beyond, it's ears flattened to it's head in anguish and hurt. He lashed his tail, his fangs barred in a snarl. He stalked toward them, purposely trodding on a thick, dead piece of bracken.

Snap!

The pair of WindClan cats turned, their eyes bright with alarm.

"Asterflight!" the she-cat gasped, her green eyes widening more. The black and white tom swung his head from the she-cat to the tom beside her.

"What do you think you're doing out here with *my* mate?" He snarled, thrusting his muzzle in the tom's face. The opposing tom reared back, his ears flattened but his eyes narrowed in defiance.

"Asterflight, stop this, please!" the she-cat begged. Asterflight turned his head from the tom to his mate.

"What are you doing?" He snarled. "You're cheating on me, aren't you? For the deputy, of all cats!" A trob of guilt entered his belly as he noticed her trembling uncontrollably, but his rage was too much for him to show any sympathy.

"Leave her alone, Asterflight," the tom beside him growled. Asterflight wheeled around, his pelt bristling in anger.

"Stay out of this, Leopardstrike!" he hissed. He turned away, too angry to speak anymore. "Keep her!" he sat to the golden pelted

deputy. "I don't want anything to do with this. But mark my words; you can have my mate but you will not take my kits from me!" With that, he ran in the direction of camp, angry boiling in his belly. As the anger ebbed to grief, he slowed until he sat and let out a low, long howl to the stars. He dug his claws into the earth. *How could you do this to me, Cherryfire?* He thought as he hung his head. *We were in love with one another since we were apprentices. How could you do this to me?!* He ripped grass from the ground in fury. He would find his way to get revenge on the Clan deputy, but his main priority was his kits. And that was exactly what he was going to do; raise his kits.

Chapter One

Asterflight padded into the nursery and purred as his kits came running towards him.

"Asterflight!" Grasskit called. "Brackenheart showed me a battle move!" The tiny golden tabby she-kit reared up onto her hind paws, her front paws flailing as she attempted to swipe down at an invisible opponent. She squeaked as she lost her footing and crashed to the soft nursery floor.

"It seems you need a bit more practice," he purred as he gently nuzzled her to her paws. When he saw her crestfallen expression, he added "Don't worry, I'm sure you'll get it down in no time. Then no ThunderClan warrior can ever beat you in battle!"

"Yeah!" Grasskit squeaked triumphantly. A snort came from Lilackit.

"You looked like a lopsided badger," she teased. Grasskit let out an exasperated gasp, pretending to be offended.

"I did not!"

A purr rumbled deep in Asterflight's throat. He looked around the nursery and noticed that Cherryfire was nowhere to be found. *Probably with Leopardstrike,* he thought bitterly. He swallowed down a bile that began to rise in his throat. *I am here for my kits,* he reminded himself.

He sat down, wrapping his tail around his paws. "Where's Patchkit?" he asked, noticing his son was also absent from the nursery.

"Off with Willowsong," Lilackit replied. She stuck out her tongue in disgust. "Messing with those stinky herbs!"

Pride surged through Asterflight. His son wanted to be a medicine cat! He gently nuzzled each of his kits in turn and got to his paws. "I'll come visit you later!" he promised as he pushed his way out of

the nursery. He walked towards the clearing before veering off towards the medicine den. As he poked his head inside, he called out a mew of greeting.

Willowsong's gray head popped out from a crevice in the den wall. "Hello, Asterflight! What can I do for you?" The warrior shook his head.

"No, I was just looking for Patchkit," Asterflight meowed. His eyes glittered in pride as he added "I hear he is interested in medicine!" Willowsong let out a purr.

"Yes, he has been coming in here every day now and has been helping me sort herbs," she purred. "But as for Patchkit, you just missed him. Cherryfire came and took him out for a walk just a few moments ago." Asterflight scowled at the mention of his former mate.

Willowsong seemed to notice this, for she frowned. "What happened to you two?" she mewed. "You guys have been like this since before your kits were born." Asterflight looked away, his ears flattening and grief returning in a flash.

"She cheated on me for Leopardstrike," he murmured. A wave of shock radiated from Willowsong.

"I-I'm sorry, Asterflight," Willowsong mewed, but Asterflight barely heard her. He was already pushing his way out of the den and trotting off. His rage increased when he saw Leopardstrike playing with three little bundles of fur, Cherryfire watching from the side with her eyes full of love.

"Leopardstrike!" he yowled. "I need to talk to you. You, me, the moor, *now*." Leopardstrike narrowed his eyes and mewed a goodbye to the kits, nuzzling Asterflight's ex-mate, and padding over to him. He gave him a curt nod, as if challenging to attack. Asterflight gave him an irritable flick of his tail before padding out of camp.

He walked towards the Fourtrees and he arrived, spinning around and his teeth bared into a snarl. Leopardstrike blinked in surprise before his eyes narrowed in suspicion.

"You stay *away* from my kits," he snarled. "You can have my foxhearted mate, but you will not take them away from me!" Surprise and triumph lit in the deputy's pale gray eyes.

"*Your* kits?" He sneered, bringing his muzzle close to Asterflight's face. "Hasn't anyone told you? They're *mine* Asterflight. Not yours at all."

Chapter Two

Disbelief and pain shot through Asterflight as if a hawk swooped down from the sky and raked its claws across his muzzle. The grin on the deputy's face grew.

"Couldn't you tell?" the deputy purred, his mocking voice as smooth as honey. "Grasskit doesn't look anything like you. Patchkit is a replica of Blackspots, my sister. The kit that looks anything like you has my tabby markings. You lost, Asterflight."

Asterflight began to tremble, but not of fear from the deputy's menacing glare and harsh words. He was shaking in pure rage. *This* foxheart stole everything from him. *He* stole Asterflight's mate those moons ago. Now he just took his kits, the last thing he had.

"What are you going to do?" Leopardstrike purred mockingly. "Cry like a kit-" But Leopardstrike's sentence was never finished. Rage overtook Asterflight and he lunged forward, sinking his fangs into the soft flesh under the deputy's chin. Leopardstrike parted his jaws to release a shriek of anguish, but nothing came. Asterflight clenched his jaw with an iron grip as he felt Leopardstrike's claws score down his flank and shoulders. Asterflight spun around and threw the wounded deputy down to the ground. Blood skimmed the grass in a smear as the deputy struggled to stand. Asterflight stalked over, shoving the deputy down before pinning him onto his back and sinking his claws down into his neck. Leopardstrike's pale gray eyes were wide with pain and horror as he made a last feeble attempt to throw Asterflight off by raking his claws down his belly before falling limp.

As the realization of what he had done set in, he backed away, his eyes wide. He had just killed Leopardstrike out of cold blood. His heart began to race and panic and regret flooded his senses *What is the Clan going to say? What will happen to me? Am I going to be exiled? Oh, StarClan help me!*

A breeze whispered through the air, soothing Asterflight's racing

mind. *Dispose the body,* a voice told him in his head. Asterflight didn't recognize the voice, but as logic began to set in he realized this voice was going to help him. *How should I do it?* He asked internally, more the voice than himself. But there was no reply. Heaving a large sigh, he moved forward and grabbed the warrior by his scruff. He dragged the body down into the hollow of Fourtrees and stopped, his pelt bristling at the scent of ThunderClan. The scent was strong and fresh. His pelt bristled in fear. What if a patrol caught him?

He blinked in relief when he realized the patrol had gone; he must of just missed them. He carried Leopardstrike to the border and rolled him in the fresh ThunderClan scent markers. Asterflight followed and inspected the warrior. Done.

Check his claws, the voice growled in his ear. Asterflight pushed aside his confusion and bent down to look. Sure enough, tufts of his jet black and white fur were caught in between them. He gripped the fur gently in his teeth and pulled it out. Once he was sure he had all of his fur out, he padded back into the hollow and dug a small hole, discarding the fur inside, before covering it up once more. Then, he raced off towards camp. He paused as he realized the blood on the moor. Panic began to rise in him once more when a rain drop fell onto his nose. Then a few more met his back. He looked up to see thick, black storm clouds in the air. The rain would wash away the blood, he realized.

Turning, he pelted towards camp. His wounds from Leopardstrike's counter attack burned, but he pushed onward. His heart was beating in his ears and guilt began to set in.

"Don't feel bad," he growled quietly to himself as the camp came into view. "He took everything from you." Then he made way into camp and let out an earsplitting yowl of terror.

Chapter Three

"What happened?" Brokenshard's yowl met Asterflight as he flew through the camp barrier. He forced his pelt to bristle and he panted from the run back.

"We... we were attacked by a ThunderClan patrol," he forced the vile lie from his mouth. The thought of lying to his Clanmates made his stomach churn, but he had to. "Leopardstrike and I were going to talk along the ThunderClan border by the Fourtrees. We picked up fresh scent and we went to investigate when three warriors flew from the undergrowth. They pinned Leopardstrike and I managed to escape for help. We must hurry!" he urged.

"Go fetch Heatherstar and tell her what has happened," Brokenshard told Sheepcoat, who nodded and pelted off to the leader's den. "Brackenheart, Swiftbreeze, Tornfur! Let's go and help Leopardstrike." Brokenshard gave Asterflight the nod to lead and he turned, forcing a limp and pacing out of camp. He went slower due to his "limp" and felt the rain soak through his pelt. It poured down rapidly as the patrol of battle hungry warriors pursued. Asterflight made a grunt in fake effort, and Brokenshard offered her shoulder for support, but he refused. He couldn't give himself away. Tornfur, a brown ragged pelted warrior, let out a grunt of impatience but said nothing. Relief surged through Asterflight when he saw that the blood in the moor had been washed away. He pushed passed and stiffened when Tornfur let out a meow.

"I smell blood," the warrior growled.

"We're not far," Asterflight called. "I-It's close by."

Tornfur shot Asterflight a suspicious glance before nodding. "Lead on then," the brown warrior grunted. Asterflight turned and padded towards Leopardstrike's body. He forced himself to go rigid. A gasp came from Swiftbreeze. Brackenheart cautiously padded forward to sniff the fallen deputy.

"Swiftbreeze, Tornfur, split up and check the border," Brokenshard ordered. "Do not stray too far. If you smell fresh ThunderClan, come back immediately." The two warriors split up and moved away.

"He's gone," Brackenheart meowed solemnly. Brokenshard flicked her ear. She moved forward and pressed her nose into his fur.

Satisfaction burned through his fur as he watched the limp deputy. He was gone at last! *But what about Cherryfire?* He asked himself. *She lost her chance when she chose Leopardstrike over you. Forget about her,* the voice growled.

Asterflight blinked his acceptance. But for now he must continue to follow his role. He walked over to Brokenshard, his eyes full of grief. He pressed his nose to his fur before drawing back.

"I-I'm so sorry," he whispered. Brokenshard gave him a look of sympathy. Tornfur broke through the undergrowth, and seconds later Swiftbreeze returned from the other side

"Nothing," Tornfur meowed. Swiftbreeze nodded her agreement, for she has come up with nothing either. Brokenshard sighed.

"Let's go home," Brokenshard mewed, grabbing the fallen deputy by his scruff.

Chapter Four

"Over the body of Leopardstrike, I hope that StarClan will approve of my choice," Heatherstar's defeated meow came from the Tallrock. Rain whipped the WindClan warriors as they sat under the dark clouds. The Clan had been devastated when the patrol had returned with their heads hung with defeat and Leopardstrike's body.

Lucky for Asterflight, the Clan had believed his tale about Leopardstrike's murder and now he sat near the entrance to the medicine den, for Willowsong had just fixed up his wounds. According to Clan ritual, Heatherstar was now forced to choose a new deputy. Asterflight knew she hated doing it, which made Leopardstrike's death even more bittersweet.

The thought of his crime sent butterflies soaring through his belly. He wished he could go back and change it all, yet at the same time he loved every second of it. He craved for violence; flesh ripping against his claws, blood splattering his tongue. Asterflight shuddered at the mere thought. Willowsong casted him a look of worry.

"Let's go inside before you catch a chill," she suggested. Asterflight shook his head.

"I want to see who our new deputy is," he replied. Amusement flickered in the medicine cat's gaze.

"If you wanted to know that, you should have been listening," she purred. Asterflight blinked in confusion, and she added. "Sheepcoat was made deputy while you were daydreaming, rabbitbrain. Now let's go inside."

Asterflight lifted his head wearily, looking around at his surroundings. When he fell asleep, he was a soft nest in the medicine den, but he was nowhere near that now.

The forest he sat in with full of shadows. Black pines and oaks stretched high into the starless sky, their branches bare and dead. The grass underpaw was a strange red hue and felt spongy and mucky on Asterflight's pads. He examined the fungi that grew at the bases of the trees, which glowed an eerie blue.

Asterflight padded around, his pelt crawling with apprehension. It suddenly hit him on where he was.

The place of No Stars.

"Greetings, Asterflight," a cool, icy voice made Asterflight jump. "It's good to meet you at last." Asterflight spun around to see a jet black she-cat. Her fur was sleek, her golden eyes glowing with an emotion he couldn't read.

"Who are you?" Asterflight demanded.

"You did well with Leopardstrike's body," she commented, skipping over his question. "You are also strong, powerful. You would make WindClan great again if you were leader of your Clan." A sudden hunger pulsed through Asterflight. Perhaps power was what he needed?

"Perhaps," the she-cat meowed, sinking her claws into the ground. "We could make an exchange."

"A trade?" Asterflight echoed, the she-cat's aurora seeming to drag him in.

"Yes," she hissed, flicking her ear irritably. "Stop asking idiotic questions before I call it off and kill you instead." Asterflight closed his jaws, his whiskers twitching with unease.

"Back to what I was trying to say before I was interrupted," she continued, her voice a low growl. "I will give you all of the power you need to rule WindClan if you do something in return."

"What is it?" Asterflight meowed carefully after a few long moments of silence.

"I need cats killed," she growled. "It's none of your concern why, but

I want their throats ripped out and lying dead."

"Who?" Asterflight meowed, his pelt prickling in excitement.

"I'll tell you as we go," she promised. "That is, if you agree to our exchange."

"Yes," Asterflight meowed. "I'll do it." *It'll satisfy my horrid crave for blood,* he reasoned. *And I'll be able to lead WindClan!*

"Good," she purred silkily as she began to fade. "We will meet again soon."

"Wait! What is your name?" Asterflight called as she vanished. His tail drooped in disappointment as her voice echoed through the trees.

"My name is Ravencry."

Chapter Five

Ravencry. *The name echoed through Asterflight's* mind. The name was familiar somehow, but he couldn't put his whiskers on it. He shrugged, getting to his paws. Shuffling out of his nest, he heard rustling from somewhere in camp. Asterflight turned, and he found himself looking at the nursery. Love floated in his heart for less than a second before it was replaced with icy hatred. Those were not his kits in the nursery.

"Make their mother suffer," Ravencry's ominous voice whispered in Asterflight's ear, causing the fur along his neck bristle. *"Kill the ones she loves. That will be perfect revenge."* Asterflight paused to think. *Very well,* Asterflight agreed. *Who shall I kill first?*

"Thrushfeather and Spottedflash," Ravencry replied. Asterflight paused. *Why them?* Then he remembered. *Cherryfire's parents. Perfect,* Asterflight almost purred out loud at the satisfaction that surged through him, causing his toes to tingle.

He trotted out of camp, his tail flicking behind him.

"Asterflight!" a voice called. Asterflight paused, his heart leaping in terror. He turned around quickly and his fears ebbed with he saw Thrushfeather walking towards him. "Where are you off to?"

"Hunting," Asterflight replied, almost too quickly. To his relief, Thrushfeather didn't notice.

"Can I come with you?" he asked. The elderly tom let out a sigh. "I need some air, and someone to talk to."

"Sure," Asterflight replied softly. *I just need to lure him away from the camp,* he thought. *Perhaps to the RiverClan this time,* he decided.

He lead the way out of camp and towards the border. Thrushfeather padded beside him. *Play with him,* Asterflight told himself. He turned to the elderly tom. "What's the matter? You said that you

needed someone to talk to."

"It's about Cherryfire," he sighed. Asterflight turned his head away, hoping that the elderly tom didn't catch the loathing and bloodlust in his eyes. "I know she hurt you," Thrushfeather's voice was sympathetic. "But she really needs some cat right now. She is a mess ever since Leopardstrike died."

"She didn't care about me when she decided to hook up with him," Asterflight hissed bitterly. "What makes you think that she will now?"

"She really did love you, Asterflight," Thrushfeather pleaded. "Please, won't you do it for her?"

"No," Asterflight unsheathed his claws. "But there *is* something I will do for her." Horror lit in the elder's eyes. He backed away.

"W-What do you mean?" Thrushfeather stammered, his ears flattening. Asterflight felt adrenaline pulse through his body as he lunged forward, sinking his teeth deep into Thrushfeather's throat. Thrushfeather opened his mouth to scream, but nothing came out. Asterflight felt blood gush into his mouth, savoring it's salty tang. He felt Thrushfeather fall limp in his jaws and he tossed the body carelessly onto the ground. He turned and ran over the hills, towards the river, where he plunged into the waters. He gasped, the coldness of the water stripping the breath from his lungs. He forced himself to crouch in the water, allowing it to run over his shoulders. Asterflight sprung out of the water, shaking his pelt quickly and spluttering out water that got into his mouth.

"Are you alright?" a voice called to Asterflight. Asterflight turned to see the dawn patrol coming, lead by Brackenheart.

"Yes," Asterflight called back. "I was chasing a rabbit to the river. I guess I forgot to jump when it got over the river."

"Mousebrain!" Sweetbreeze teased. "You must be freezing!"

"I'm fine," Asterflight reassured her, although he was shaking. But he wasn't shaking from cold. Guilt and excitement pulsed through

him from the act he had just committed. "I'm just going to take a run to warm up. Maybe I'll be able to catch something on my way back."

"Alright," Brackenheart nodded. The patrol turned and headed over the hill. Asterflight began to trot, and broke into a run as he heard the cries of horror from his Clanmates from what they had just found laying in the grass.

Chapter Six

"No!" Cherryfire's shriek rang through the air as Asterflight carried his fat rabbit back to camp. He glanced briefly over to her and saw her lying by her father's body, sticking her muzzle into the tom's pale mottled gray fur. Spottedflash crouched beside her daughter and the she-cats grieved.

Asterflight held back a guilty sigh. He dropped the rabbit onto the fresh kill pile and began to walk away when three bundles of fur charged towards him.

"Asterflight!" Grasskit squealed, launching herself at him. Asterflight forced a smile and tumbled along with her.

"Hello, Grasskit," he forced happiness in his meow. He sat up, mud from the rain the day before sticking to his black and white pelt. "What are you doing out? You'll catch a chill if you're out too long."

"We're exploring!" Lilackit explained, fluffing out her tiny chest. She glanced behind her. Asterflight lifted his gaze and followed it to see Patchkit staring at where his mother lay.

"Patchkit!" Grasskit whined. "Come on! We're supposed to be exploring!"

"I think something is wrong with Cherryfire," the little brown and golden tom mewed. Grasskit and Lilackit both turned to see their mother curled up in front of Thrushfeather. Patchkit looked over at him.

"Asterflight?" he meowed. "Do you know what's wrong with Cherryfire?"

"Come here, kits," he meowed as he padded into the empty elders den. The kits looked in confusion.

"Why are we in here?" Grasskit asked.

"Because we need somewhere quiet and private to talk," he meowed gently. "Cherryfire is really sad right now. It isn't the best time to try and comfort her. Her father just traveled to StarClan." Awe glowed in the kits' eyes, although Patchkit seemed skeptical.

"But medicine cats go to StarClan all of the time and no cat ever gets sad," he meowed. Thinking on the spot, Asterflight replied.

"Yes, they do. But when medicine cats go, they are only visiting their warrior ancestors. When a cat travels there..." Asterflight paused to think of a nice way of saying what he meant. "... Well, they don't come back."

"Why not?" Grasskit asked, her green eyes started to widen.

"Because when a cat journeys there, it becomes their new home, and that's why Cherryfire is sad," Asterflight replied. His tail tip, which was behind his back, flicked in irritation at the kits' questions.

"One more question," Lilackit mewed. "Why did he go there?" Asterflight froze momentarily before blinking slowly.

"Because it was his time," he mewed. But as he followed the kits out of the empty den and back to the nursery, he began to wonder if it was really true.